

THE HONORABLE JOHN C. COUGHENOUR

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON
AT SEATTLE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

v.

JOSE MORALES-FLORES,

Defendant.

CASE NO. CR20-0136-JCC-2

ORDER

This matter comes before the Court on Defendant Jose Morales-Flores's motion to proceed with a guilty plea hearing by video conference (Dkt. No. 127). Having thoroughly considered the motion and the relevant record, the Court hereby GRANTS the motion for the reasons explained herein.

I. BACKGROUND

Mr. Morales-Flores has been charged with conspiring to distribute controlled substances and possessing fentanyl and methamphetamine with intent to distribute. (Dkt. No. 1 at 1–6.) He would like to plead guilty and proceed with the plea hearing by video conference. (Dkt. No. 127.)

II. DISCUSSION

Delaying Mr. Morales-Flores's plea hearing would cause serious harm to the interests of justice. *See* W.D. Wash. General Orders 04-20, 09-20, 14-20, 17-20, 06-21. Under General Order

04-21, with limited exceptions, in-person hearings will not resume until June 30, 2021. While in-person proceedings in the courthouse have begun to increase this month, the Court is still strictly limiting the number of proceedings that can occur concurrently and the number of people who can attend those proceedings. *See* W.D. Wash. General Order 04-21 at 2. Delaying Mr. Morales-Flores's plea hearing and, as a consequence, his sentencing, by at least several weeks would cause serious harm to the interests of justice because Mr. Morales-Flores has a strong interest in the speedy resolution of this matter now that he has decided to plead guilty.

III. CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, the Court GRANTS Defendant Jose Morales-Flores's motion to proceed with a guilty plea by video conference (Dkt. No. 127) and ORDERS that his plea hearing be scheduled before a Magistrate Judge as soon as practicable and be conducted by video conference.

DATED this 19th day of May 2021.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John C. Coughenour", written over a horizontal line.

John C. Coughenour
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE